

Authoritarian Rule Outlined

Birch Unit's Mold Anti-Red

25X1A

By Robert P. Hey

Staff Writer of
The Christian Science Monitor

Belmont, Mass.

The John Birch Society, which has been attracting nationwide attention, is a militantly anti-Communist group ruled—as one of its high officials confirms—in authoritarian fashion by Robert H. W. Welch, Jr.

The organization has members throughout the country. Its influence is strongest in the Southwest and southern California.

The ultraconservative society works behind the scenes to achieve its aims—primarily through "front" organizations and letter-writing campaigns directed from its Belmont, Mass., headquarters. Most important current project is its attempt to impeach Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the United States.

Mr. Welch stresses that loyal Americans must "stop letting the Communists have the whole effective use of this weapon [front organizations] practically by default."

Anti-Eisenhower Blast

Four years after founding the society, Mr. Welch wrote in a confidential 268-page letter circulated among an undisclosed number of friends that the then-President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, was "a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy." In the document he also charged that John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, Milton Eisenhower, and other high government officials were either Communist agents or Communist dupes.

However at a press conference Friday Mr. Welch denied he ever had called former President Eisenhower a "card-carrying Communist."

In the organization's Blue Book, required reading for all prospective members, he says: "Democracy is merely a deceptive phrase, a weapon of demagoguery, and a perennial fraud."

Seeks 1,000,000 Members

Eventual group aim is 1,000,000 "truly dedicated" members—and 100,000 by the end of this year. As set up by Mr. Welch, the society functions "almost entirely through small local chapters," of from 10 to 20 members each.

Most reliable estimates are that chapters located in 33 states have a total membership of close to 100,000.

The society does not disclose the names of its members, how many there are, or the identity of the 11 other founders besides Mr. Welch.

The society has been under heavy fire of late.

Though he declined to disclose whether the Justice Department planned an investigation of the society, a department official said this past week that the group has become "a matter of concern to the Attorney General."

Probes Loom

Senators Thomas J. Dodd (D) of Connecticut and Thomas H. Kuchel (R) of California have asked for a congressional investigation of the group and its leaders.

Senators Mike Mansfield (D) of Montana and Milton R. Young (R) of North Dakota have criticized the group's activities from the floor of the Senate.

In Boston on Friday, Representative Sumner Z. Kaplan (D) of Brookline disclosed that he will press for an investigation of the society by the Massachusetts Commission on Communism and Subversive Activities. He said that on Monday he will introduce into the Massachusetts House an order calling for the investigation.

Vital Job Related

Direct effects of the society are difficult to assess, since the group works in large measure behind the scenes. Popular vehicles for action are "front" organizations: telephone calls, telegrams, and letter-writing campaigns by individual society members.

In footnotes for the fourth

printing of the Blue Book, in

March, 1961, Mr. Welch writes:

"Our members have done a tremendous job, in proportion to their numbers at any given time, in some 50 letter-writing campaigns to date. . . . Our most important impact has been in getting over 600,000 post cards and letters into the mails, opposing the second summit conference."

In February of this year Gordon D. Hall, for 15 years a full-time investigator of extremist groups, was scheduled to deliver three lectures in Macon, Ga.

Before Mr. Hall arrived in Macon, a flood of telephone calls from society members to the sponsors of the lectures and to selected officials and civic leaders resulted in cancellation of two of the engagements. The callers charged he was a Communist agent.

After convincing local authorities he was not a Communist, Mr. Hall fulfilled the third engagement.

Persuasive Influence

In Wichita, Kan., fear that society members might "ruin his business" by widely charging he was a Communist dissuaded a local businessman from contributing to the society's magazine. The magazine is controlled

then in a campaign to have certain professors removed from the institution.

Also in Wichita, society members are taking credit for persuading a large Baptist church to withdraw from the National Council of Churches on grounds that the latter is soft on communism, Mr. Hall says.

Prospective members living in areas where there is no local chapter join the Home Chapter. Their contact with the society—"even as to the work we ask them to do"—is through the organization's monthly bulletins.

Rather than attracting many ineffectual members, Mr. Welch wants a smaller number of "disciplined pullers at the oars." "Now that last statement," he says in the Blue Book, "may put you in mind of the Communist principle of the 'dedicated few,' as enunciated by Lenin. And we are, in fact, willing to draw on all successful human experience in organizational matters. . . ."

Elsewhere in the Blue Book he says that "those members who cease to feel the necessary degree of loyalty can either resign or will be put out before they build up any splintering following."

First of a series